

CHAPTER II.

MACHIAVELLI AND

MORE.

THE characteristic effects of the Renaissance movement on political thought are most strikingly apparent in the works of the Italian, Niccolo Machiavelli, and the Englishman, Thomas More. As we shall see, they differ widely in their conception of government, but, in both, the critical spirit, as directed to political institutions, finds most forcible expression.

A few weeks after the execution of Savonarola, Niccolo Machiavelli became Chancellor and Secretary to "The Ten of Liberty and Peace," or ministry of foreign affairs. This post he occupied for thirteen years till the fall of the republic in 1512. He was frequently employed in diplomatic missions which took him to France and Germany as well as to most of the Italian States. He thus acquired the knowledge of men and affairs, which he turned to account as an author, during his enforced retirement at San Casciano, in consequence of the relapse of the republic under Medician sway. The remainder of his life was that of a sorely-tried and disappointed suitor of fortune. Both his desire and his failure to win office are responsible for the works which he wrote during the fifteen years that intervened between the loss of his office in 1512 and his death in 1527. Two of these works, the "Principe" and the "Discorsi," which he began in 1513, have made him immortal. Machiavelli is, in truth, a giant among political thinkers, the greatest that had appeared since the days of Aristotle. His importance for us lies in his method, as much as, if not more than, in his matter. In his method of treating political problems he is a new man in political philosophy. He appeals to history, not to revelation, for an answer to these problems. He divorces politics from theology, and follows reason, instructed by history, as his guide. The mediaeval doctors had, as we have seen, elaborated